(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) to (c) Lower Koti is not a sub-post office, but is only a branch Post Office. Branch Post Offices are not authorised for collection of telephone bills under the existing policy of the Department of Posts.

Extension of distance of local calls

†2593. SHRI ANIL SHARMA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to extend distance of local calls in view of modern technology;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) and (b) Sir, at present there is no proposal to enhance distance slab for local call facility.

(c) (i) The local call facility is currently being allowed for calls made anywhere in Short Distance Charging Area (SDCA), which is generally co-terminus with a tehsil. The local call facility is also extended to the calls made to adjoining SDCA.

(ii) Further, with a view to promote community of interest, the charges for intra-circles STD calls of distance above 50 Kms and upto 200 Kms have already been reduced with effect from 26-1-2000. The call charges for distances 50-100 Kms and 100-200 Kms are now 1/8th and 1/2 respectivel of the earlier rates.

(iii) As local call facility is already being provided over quite a long distance and intra-circle call charges have also been reduced, there is no proposal at present to review the existing facility.

STD/ISD/PCO Booths in Arunachal Pradesh

2594. SHRI NABAM REBIA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the applications for providing STD/ISD/Telephones and PCO booths in all the telecom circles of Arunachal Pradesh pending with Government during the last two years; and

(b) the steps taken by Government in this regard ?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) Sir, in the State of Arunachal Pradesh, 226 applications were pending for allotment of STD/ISD/PCOs during the last two years but no application was pending for allotment of STD/ISD/Telephones during the said period.

(b) Steps taken to clear the pending applications include increase of the exchange capacity, provision of more number of channels, expansion of external plant etc.

New Technology for VPTs in Arunachal Pradesh

2595. SHRI NABAM REBIA : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have formulated any comprehensive scheme for the new technology options for Village Public Telephones in the country, particularly in Arunchal Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Government have formulated a comprehensive plan to induct new technologies in rural telephony including Village Public Telephone. These are Wireless in Local Loop (WLL) CDOT Point to Multi-Point System (CDOT PMP) and satellite-based telephones for remote and inaccessible areas in the country over and above the conventional technology of under ground cables.

(c) Does not arise in view of (a) and (b) above.

E-Post Service

2596. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the Department of Posts has launched a new service, "E-Post Service";

(b) if so, the details thereof and the various facilities the service is intended to provide;